

STAKEHOLDER ANNOUNCEMENT

USDA to Host Listening Session to Help Expand Broadband Access in Tribal Communities Under the ReConnect Program

WASHINGTON, April 15, 2021 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced it is hosting a listening session on April 20, 2021, to solicit ideas on ways to help expand broadband access in tribal communities under the [Reconnect Program](#).

USDA is inviting comments and recommendations from tribal communities and tribal broadband industry experts on a [ReConnect Program final rule](#) originally published on Feb. 26, 2021. The final rule will:

- eliminate unnecessary paperwork requirements;
- remove outdated funding restrictions;
- simplify eligibility requirements; and
- create an annual notice to announce scoring criteria and other requirements each fiscal year.

USDA is requesting comments on tribal considerations regarding the ReConnect Program final rule, including the timeframe in which USDA determines an applicant's eligibility for funding. The department also invites feedback on challenges and barriers tribal communities face to access programs to finance broadband infrastructure on tribal lands and how USDA can improve its collaborations with other federal agencies.

The listening session will be held virtually on Tuesday, April 20, 2021, at 3:30 p.m. Eastern Time. To register, visit <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/4354258874821794319>.

Topics to be discussed during the session include the following summary of comments that USDA has received on the rule from tribal communities to date:

- Requirements for tribal letters of support for applicants serving tribal lands;
- Flexibilities for tribal applicants;
- Enabling tribal governments to serve their own lands; and
- Tribal authority to certify whether they are served or underserved.

Comments on the final rule must be submitted through <https://www.regulations.gov> by April 27, 2021. For additional information on how to submit comments, see page 11603 of the Feb. 26, 2021, [Federal Register](#).

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